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CHAPTER XI

RELIGION

Introduction

We know that in all religions there are two factors to be considered a specific feeling and certain beliefs, conceptions, customs, and acts associated with that feeling; that the belief most inextricably connected with that religious feeling is the one in spirits more powerful than man and controlling everything in life which he values. 771

The beliefs themselves play an important part with all people, but the importance of the specific feeling varies with each individual. A perusal of the fasting experiences (see pp. 293-308) will make this quite clear. It is because we do not separate the actions and testimony of the religious man from that of the intermittently religious and the nonreligious man that most presentations of the subject are so confused and vague. It is, of course, extremely difficult to obtain the real attitude of the intermittently religious and the nonreligious man, because it is the religious individual and leader who gives form to the expressions which religion assumes in ceremony and prayer. Yet we must recognize that there is a difference and that it is often this difference that accounts for certain contradictions in the information obtained. The one place where it is possible, at least among the Winnebago, to obtain some idea of the emotional make-up and attitude of the intermittently religious man, is the fasting ordeal, and from a comparison of those experiences it is quite clear that a sufficiently large number of people were not able to obtain that thrill which they had been taught to expect. It is also clear that the shamans and religious leaders recognized this fact and provided for it by advising such people to buy the requisite protection against the trials and misfortunes of life, or as they put it, "the crises or narrow places of life." Such a person would certainly not be regarded as one of the leaders of the tribe. [789]

The ideal that the parent held before the eyes of his children is quite eloquently put in the system of instructions (see p. 166). 867 787

> My son, when you grow up, you should try to be of some benefit to your fellowmen. There is only one way in which this can be done, and that is to fast . . . If you thirst to death, the spirits who are in control of wars will bless you . . . But, my son, if you do not fast repeatedly it will be all in vain that you inflict sufferings upon your-

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867
787 self. Blessings are not obtained except by making the proper offerings to the spirits and by putting yourself, time and again, in the proper mental condition . . . If you do not obtain a spirit to strengthen you, you will amount to nothing in the estimation of your fellowmen, and they will show you little respect . . . My son, as you travel along life's path, you will find many narrow passages (i. e., crises), and you can never tell when you will come to them. Try to anticipate them, so that you will be endowed with sufficient strength (by obtaining powers from the spirits) to pass safely through these narrow passages.

● 771 Among the Winnebago religion is definitely connected with the preservation of life values. It is not a phenomenon distinct from mundane life, but one of the most important means of maintaining social ideals. What these are can be gleaned from practically every prayer; they are success, happiness, and long life. The vast majority of investigators are often surprised at the intense religious life which, among the North American Indians, exists side by side with an intense realism and with a clear understanding and appreciation of the materialistic basis of life. The explanation, to judge from the Winnebago data, is simple enough. The Indian does not interpret life in terms of religion, but religion in terms of life. In other words, he exalts the world around him and the multifarious desires and necessities of the day, so that they appear to him bathed in a religious thrill. At least that is what the devoutly religious man does and most of the religious data presented in this volume emanates from him. Still we are convinced that for the vast majority of Winnebago, in other words, for the intermittently religious, there are many moments in life and many actions which are seen through this pleasurable religious thrill.

224 Every Winnebago will admit that to perform the *wunu"tce're* cere-
796 mony (p. 111) and, on the following day, to agree to start at a certain hour, would not necessarily result in killing a bear. The bear tracks are to be followed and a person is to persevere until the bear is captured, in spite of the fact that the *wunu"tce're* ceremony is supposed to insure the capture of the animal.

726 Or again let us take the following example. No man can hope to
787 go on a warpath and kill an enemy unless he is authorized to do so by a definite blessing received during fasting. If we were to accept this statement as such, we might be led to believe that the Winnebago were willing to risk their young men on so dangerous an undertaking as a warpath, on the sole strength of a fasting experience. It does not stand to reason that they would, and a careful inquiry into the subject has shown that they never did. What actually happened was that the prospective war leader translated into religious terms the exact conditions and requirements of every particular war party. That is why the chief of the tribe and the shamans insisted that only such a person who had been blessed with the most specific kind of knowledge, such as the number of men he must take

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along, the amount of food required, the number of moccasins necessary, the number and strength of the enemy, where he was to meet them, etc.—that only such a man might start on a warpath. If an individual failed to give the proper assurances and guarantees to the chief, his expedition was not countenanced. If, nevertheless, he went, any mishap was directly chargeable to him. 726 737

In other words, we are dealing here with a more or less fixed way of describing the mundane happenings of life. The terminology is religious, but does that mean that there is always a religious feeling attached to it? That is the crucial question to determine. We believe that the religious element in such a happening depends upon the religious susceptibility of the individual concerned. It is quite possible that a devoutly religious man may think of the religious aspect of a rite or action more than one who is but indifferently religious, but he will never for one moment forget that the questions involved here are of a purely human nature. The most that can be said of the religious element of the two particular cases mentioned above is that they will spur the person on. Perhaps it is the realization that such is the case that often prompts the more matter-of-fact individuals to lay such stress on fasting preparatory to starting on a warpath. There, indeed, seems to have been a matter-of-fact movement in the tribe, for the members of the Warrior clan claimed that they could dispense with the fasting, and that mere membership in that particular clan gave them the right to go on a warpath whenever they wished to. This we know was vigorously denied by other individuals. 771 614 787

The Winnebago has no disinterested, unselfish love for the spirit or deity to whom he prays, except in so far as every man is likely to develop such an attitude at some crisis or when his mind is fixed intently on the attainment of some personal advantage. Then, naturally enough, the spirits who are to bestow these blessings are addressed in the most laudatory terms. To show how intimately these spirits are bound up with the worldly affairs of man and how little they mean to him apart from this we have but to point out that, for the vast majority of Winnebago, the spirits' freedom of action is conceived of as definitely restricted. There seems to be a purely mechanical relation of cause and effect between the offerings of men and their acceptance by the spirits. The latter are not free to reject them except in theory. Was it not ordained by Earthmaker, when the earth was created, that in return for tobacco the spirits were to bestow blessings on man? So every Winnebago believes. The religious leaders insisted that only when the proper offerings were made in the proper way would the spirits bestow their blessings. But after all is said and done, the chances that the proper conditions would not be fulfilled were negligible. And we doubt whether this 776 782 771

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776 782 771 rather high conception was shared by all the Winnebago. Our impression is that many Winnebago believed the offering would be mechanically followed by the blessing. Take, for instance, the following example: A middle-aged Winnebago while hunting was suddenly surprised by the enemy. He succeeded in making his escape into a cave. All hope of final delivery seemed to be gone, for the enemy stationed themselves before the entrance. Now this man had never been blessed in his youth and knew little about the proper procedure to observe when making offerings to the spirits. In this terrible crisis he turned instinctively to the spirits. He took some tobacco and put some in the different nooks of the cave, and said: "Spirits, whoever you are, and wherever you are, it is said that you love tobacco and that in return for it you bless people. Here is some tobacco, and I ask that I may return to my people." There was, as far as we know, no promise made that in return he would make further offerings to them or that he would thereafter love them and honor them. He escaped and unquestionably believed that it was due to the intervention of the spirits, but the spirits were, quite clearly, constrained to act because they had received tobacco.

There can be little doubt that many Winnebago felt as this man did. We find an expression of the same attitude in a myth. The Winnebago are represented as making offerings to the buffalo spirits, and the smoke is ascending to the home of these spirits through a hole in the sky. The younger buffalos can not resist the temptation of approaching the opening to catch a few whiffs of their favorite tobacco. They are thereupon warned by the older buffalos not to go too close, for the tobacco fumes might tempt them too strongly; and should they succumb to the temptation and accept the offerings, they would then have to appear on earth and be killed by man.

776 782 771 825 As might have been expected, there is in the relation of the spirits to man something similar to the securing of the food animal by some such ceremony as the *wuna°kere*. The spirits are dazzled, hypnotized by the offerings, and accept.

In the second of the examples given above we were dealing with a food animal—the buffalo. If there is any plausibility in the explanation we advanced before that the Winnebago interprets religion in terms of life, the relation of the spirits to the food supply ought to show it. Now, it is characteristic of the Winnebago religion that the great generalized spirit deities, like Earthmaker, Sun, Moon, etc., have little to do with the securing of specific kinds of food. As a rule, some generalized spirit-animal presides over the various species of animals, and he gladly permits the animals to appear on earth to be killed by man when the proper offerings are made. This seems to have been a secondary interpretation, however, developed probably [756] under the influence of the shamans as a substitute for the purely mechanical attitude mentioned above. To picture the food animals

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as desirous of being killed and eaten by man is, however, but another way of saying that the food animals were killed and eaten, and were secondarily and weakly brought into the general religious life, because everything was seen through a religious vista. It is by no means certain that this was always the case, and there seem to be innumerable indications in the myths that there was a time when the securing of the food animals was not connected with religion as such.

Just as the securing of food animals is to-day connected with certain spirits, so are the various activities of man during his life. But characteristically it is not a generalized conception of life, but life as consisting of a prescribed number of years, with so many war honors, so much wealth, so much food consumed, so many children, etc. The spirits are exhorted to give to every man his allotted number of years, food, etc. These are apparently his by right, and if he dies before his time the ghost of the deceased is asked to beg the spirits to distribute among his relatives the "unused" years, food, etc. So here, too, we have a clear example of the explanation of purely materialistic conception of life in terms of religion.

It will be best to discuss the main features of Winnebago religion under the following heads:

I. The religious concepts:
   1. The concept of supernatural power.
   2. The concept and nature of the spirits.
   3. The power and localization of the spirits.

II: 1. The twofold interpretation of the relation of the spirits to man.
   2. The guardian spirits.
   3. Personal religious experiences.

III. Methods of bringing the spirits into relation with man:
   1. Fasting.
   2. Mental concentration.
   4. Offerings and sacrifices.
   5. Prayers.

IV. The folkloristic concepts:
   1. The concept of evil.
   2. The concept of disease.
   3. The concepts of death, after-life, and reincarnation.
   4. The concept of the soul.

V. The cosmological ideas.

The Concept of Supernatural Power[1]

The Winnebago have no such belief in a "magic power" as Mr. J. N. B. Hewitt and Mr. W. Jones would have us believe exists among [114]

[1] For a general discussion of this concept in North America cf. my paper on the "Religion of the North American Indians," Journal of American Folklore, vol. IX, no. [illegible], pp. 344-351.

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T71 [114] the Iroquois and Fox.[1] In the article mentioned above we have given our reasons for believing that these ethnologists were mistaken in their interpretation.

T76 192 In the Winnebago language the four words most commonly used in speaking of the spirits are *wak'aⁿ*, *wak'a'ndja*, *zop*, and *waxop'i'ni*. *Wak'aⁿ* seems exactly equivalent to our word "sacred," while *wak'a'ndja*, which is identical with the Omaha word *wakonda*, means thunderbird. In all likelihood it originally meant "he who is sacred" or something like that. It has nothing to do with the word "thunder," which is *k'oire* in Winnebago. The word *wak'aⁿ* also means snake, for the snake is a holy animal among the Winnebago, the messenger of the spirits. The word *zop*, identical with the Omaha *zube*, is more difficult to define. It means sacred and awe-inspiring and seems to be associated, in the eyes of the Winnebago, with the intensely emotional aspects of religion, where self is completely forgotten. Those ceremonies, in which the performers work [786] themselves into a frenzy of excitement and dance naked, are always referred to as *zop*. The word *waxop'i'ni* is clearly a noun compounded of the indefinite prefix *wa-* and the suffix *-ni*, which possibly is an old agentive nominalizer, or, more probably, an old stem meaning "man." It occurs also in the word *manka'ni*, medicine-man. In other words it means "he who" or "that which is holy." *Waxop'i'ni* is the only Winnebago word for spirit. Both the words *wak'andja* and *waxop'i'ni* are very definite terms referring to individualized spirits.

T76 T71 192 As to the use of the adjectives *wak'aⁿ* and *zop*, there seems to be little mystery about them. They are used much as our words "holy" and "sacred." Anything in any way connected with the spirits is either *wak'aⁿ* or *zop*. If a Winnebago were to come across some unusually shaped object he might offer tobacco to it, and upon being questioned he would undoubtedly say that the object is *wak'aⁿ*. What is it that he means by *wak'aⁿ*? From my experience in the field he simply means that it is "sacred," and if pressed for a more definite answer he would probably say that it has the power of

[1] According to Mr. Hewitt, *orenda* is a "magic power which was assumed . . . to be inherent in every body . . . and in every personified attribute, property, or activity . . . This hypothetic principle was conceived to be immaterial, occult, impersonal, mysterious in mode of action . . . The possession of *orenda* . . . is the distinctive characteristic of all the gods, and these gods in earlier time were all the bodies and beings of nature in any manner affecting the weal or woe of man." (Article "Orenda" in the Handbook of American Indians, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 30, pt. 2.) According to W. Jones, the *manito* "is an unsystematic belief in a cosmic, sky-borne property, which is believed to be existing everywhere in nature . . . The conception of this something wavers between that of a communicable property, that of a mobile, invisible substance, and that of a latent transferable energy; . . . this substance, property, or energy is conceived as being widely diffused amongst natural objects and human beings . . . the presence of it is promptly assigned as the explanation of any unusual power or efficacy which any object or person is found to possess; . . . It is a distinct and rather abstract conception of a diffused, all-pervasive, invisible, manipulable, and transferable life-energy, or universal force . . . (Finally) all success, strength, or prosperity is conceived to depend upon the possession of (this force)."—"The Algonkin Manitou" (Journal of American Folklore, vol. 18, no. LXX, pp. 183-190, 1905).

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bestowing blessings upon him in other words, of acting like a spirit, a *warop'i'ni*. That is why he offers tobacco to it. We would be inclined to say that the individual finding such an object has created a new spirit. Such a new spirit may be forever confined to the particular family to which the individual belongs. It might die with him, or, on the other hand, it might acquire great importance and popularity and become a tribal spirit. What seems to have happened, in the vast majority of cases, however, among the Winnebago, is that owing to the marked development of the spirit-deities and cosmogonic myths, such "sacred" objects were interpreted as being either some manifestation of a spirit, some transformation which he had assumed, or as inhabited by a spirit.

The reason why, in our opinion, so many ethnologists have apparently misinterpreted the nature of *wak'a*[a] is due to the fact that when something that, from the European viewpoint, is immaterial and inanimate, like vapor, light, movement, etc., is called *wak'a*[a], then it seems difficult for them to imagine that it can be so except by virtue of some intimate connection with a definite spirit, and if that can not be demonstrated, then the only solution left is to fall back upon the "magic power" idea. By doing this they clearly show that for them the test of individualization is corporeality of a fairly definite kind, dependent mainly upon visual sensations. This brings us to a fundamental problem, not only for Winnebago religion, but for North American religion in general.

The Concept and Nature of the Spirits

Those Indians who have never spent any time thinking upon the nature of spirits can not truly be said to have any concept of their nature, whether vague or definite. They simply repeat what they have heard from the more religiously inclined. An answer prompted by a moment's consideration, as is often the case when an ethnologist interrogates them, does not necessarily reflect the current view of the subject, nor, for that matter, even the same Indian's belief after he has given the matter some thought. Many Winnebago, with whom the author was fairly well acquainted, refused to answer certain questions offhand and asked for time to reflect about them. It seems justified, when we are studying a subject like religion, to ask for information from those who have, in all probability, formulated the beliefs—the shamans. It is from them that we must strive to learn whether the spirits are conceived of as anthropomorphic, theromorphic, dream-phantasms, or indefinite entities in general.

In trying to discover this the author found, not only that he was asking a leading question, but that he was asking an unnecessary question. It was soon quite clear that the Winnebago did not

764 the Judge asked what this meant they told
775 him that it was for the spirit to pass through in going out and in.

●771 He never found among them during the long period of his intercourse any evidence of sun worship, and thinks it fell far short of that in which I agree with him.

115 This morning I had a further conversation with Judge Walker, who is a regular medicine man of the Wyandottes. He says
776 the name of the Spirit of Medicine among
171 the Wyandottes is Mon-ane-tow, who is the same as the Manitou of the Ojibways etc. That this spirit of Medicine is a good spirit etc. He says that the initiations described
796 by Judge Williams are in the presence only
575 of medicine men and women. The people of the tribe are not allowed to be present. That both men and women are members, and are regularly initiated before they can become members. That no oath of secrecy is required, as the Indian knows nothing about oaths, but they initiate on the honor of the man ar . of the woman, choosing such only as are known to be of good character for integrity. That the Society and its pro-
[755] ceedings are secret, except these ceremonies which medicine men perform on patients for their cure.

796 Walker says that these ceremonies pro-
575 ceed upon the idea that a violent shock of the nervous system, which prostrates it en-
828 tirely will also prostrate or relax the hold of
158 the disease. They know by experience that by fasting and steaming they so arouse and excite a well person as to produce a shock which will throw him to the earth. This is done at the ceremony of initiation which Judge Williams described. It is done by nervous excitement, and Indian faith in these ceremonies, and is repeated over every initiate as a proof of the possession by medicine men of this marvellous power. He

105 538 773 If Hare succeeds, it is because all his antecedents fit him better for the task. In the original Hare cycle he is born of a human woman and brought up by grandmother Earth herself. Although, at the beginning, his benefactions to mankind are all accidental, they do, at the end, give man the complete quota of his needs. It was comparatively easy to transform him into a hero without blemish. His one fault is demanding too much for man.

It is at this point that the problem of order versus disorder again presents itself. Not content with destroying evil on earth Hare demands immortality for his uncles and his nieces. Thus, like the Twins, he disrupts the world order through excess of constructive powers. But the difference between the Twins and Hare is that the former do it out of a kind of power drive while Hare does it in the supposed interests of man.

According to the story Hare, of course, fails. So obstinately, however, does he refuse to accept the inevitable that Earthmaker consents to an apparent revision of the world order in one respect. He will grant man the possibility of transcending death, by means of successive reincarnations, on condition that he agrees to face life and its vicissitudes in accordance with a specific ethical code. This is, of course, the theme of the Medicine Rite. For man, then, an exception to the law of birth, growth and death is permitted to this extent—he can repeat the cycle of birth, growth and decay an indefinite number of times.

But it is naturally in religion and ritualism that we must expect to find the best illustrations of the basic principles we have so far discussed in connection with social organization and mythology and to these we shall now turn.

4. RELIGION

105 121 771 Because of the highly complex character of Winnebago religion I shall confine myself primarily to an analysis of the nature of the powers the spirits and deities are supposed to possess, the relationship postulated between them and man, and the requests man makes

to them. To understand properly these three problems we must, at the outset, try to distinguish between the layman's and the priest's conception, between the exoteric and the esoteric viewpoint although, to be sure, the two are never mutually exclusive. 105 /21 771

For the ordinary man, the lay Winnebago, the primary powers of the vast majority of the deities have always inhered in the deities themselves. They are their own possessions and have not been bestowed upon them from without. Moreover these powers relate to the actual natural functions these deities perform. The prayers of man to the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Night-spirits, the Thunderbirds, etc. are, primarily, that they continue their functions and do not deviate from them. But man recognizes that they also have secondary functions, that, for instance, the sun, the morning and evenings stars, the thunderbirds, the night-spirits, all possess the power to give man long life and victory on the warpath; that the grizzly bear spirits have curative powers to bestow upon him and the waterspirits have special powers in connection with death-dealing medicines, etc. This socialization of the spirits and deities brings them that much closer to man. By bringing them this much closer to man they are deprived, however, of something of their independence and freedom of action. They have now become more specifically oriented toward mankind than toward their functioning in the universe at large. This change in orientation did not come about mechanically or accidentally. It represents the priest-thinker's conception, his attempt to establish linkages and meaningful relationships between men and the world of spirits. This attempt, from the nature of things, can never completely succeed for the simple reason that the primary functions of most of the nature gods—and they are the important ones—cannot be eliminated, must, in fact, not be eliminated. In the case, however, of animal deities, their older primary functions can be attenuated to a very marked extent and deities can be developed who never possessed functions other than those we have designated as secondary, that is, deities who function only in relation to man. 105 771 776 [782]

Since the nature gods, however, were the great gods, they served as patterns for all the others and the marked split in their orienta-

105 tion became, more or less, the characteristic of all spirits and deities.
771 The older condition, where the god concerned himself with his pri-
776 mary functioning and where relations to man were strictly neutral, was set off against his later condition where he was specifically enmeshed in man and man in him. These older deities—the waterspirits, for instance, belong here—never bestowed upon man either good or evil blessings. Like the waterspirits, they gave man the materials out of which he could prepare his own good or evil. That, I think, was always the lay point of view. Manifestly this led at times, to extreme individualism and clearly did not make for organization. The priest-thinker in seeking to bring more order into the various functions of the deities introduced new evaluations and new distinctions. For example, the earlier functioning of most of the deities was now interpreted as essentially evil or at least of no positive relation to man. In their later status, on the contrary, they generously brought man good blessings and they themselves became beneficent and friendly deities.

This socialization of the deities was entirely the work of the priest-thinkers. It succeeded completely, only in the case of Earthmaker and in their masterpiece, the Medicine Rite. In all other instances the lay interpretation was still largely dominant: man could never be certain what he would receive from the spirit to whom he was praying and making offerings, nor feel that he could always guard himself adequately against the dangers inherent in the approach to the supernatural. This uncertainty was expressed in a number of ways. One of them is very typical for the Winnebago. Every youth, during his puberty vision-quest, was warned by his elders against accepting too generous a gift of power from the deities. This was the matter-of-fact parent's euphemistic way of saying, 'Do not let them deceive you or work evil upon you.' The thinker, of course, interpreted this in an entirely different fashion. For him, a faster who accepted more from the gods than he could fulfill was the victim of his own overreaching and lack of that sense of proportion which, alone, can save man from destruction.

This recognition, then, of the ambivalent or, at least, veiled nature of the deity's attitude toward him is something that man must learn to accept and which he must also learn to meet in such fashion that

the spirit or deity will be constrained, willingly or otherwise, to grant him his request. How can this be done? The answer will depend upon who is speaking, a Winnebago layman or a Winnebago priest-thinker. The layman's view is embodied in the myth of the origin and function of tobacco. There the deities are mechanically constrained to give the powers they possess to any human being who comes with an offering of tobacco. Here the human suppliant theoretically determines what he is to receive and how he is to employ it. In actual practice, of course, the situation is never so simple even in the case of the most matter-of-fact individual or the most matter-of-fact deity. Both are swayed by contradictory and conflicting emotions. Man wishes a maximum of power but is held back from making the maximum request for fear that it will be too dangerous for him to do so. The deities wish to be sustained by the tobacco for which they have an almost uncontrolled craving but dread the loss of power it entails. As a result man is prone to ask too little or too much and the deities to give too little or too much. Both lead to disorder and result in evil.

To restore order in such a situation where, on the one hand, you are dealing with human nature with its ceaseless changes, its impermanence and its inability to foresee the future and the consequences of its demands and, on the other, with divine nature, with its unchangeability, its permanence and its foreknowledge, was a problem of extreme difficulty and delicacy. The added fact that, according to the universally accepted Winnebago belief, the spirits and deities depended for their happiness and much of their functioning upon the sustenance they obtained from man, further complicated it. The problem, of course, existed primarily for the priest-thinker.

To a large degree it was of the latter's own making. To the matter-of-fact man, the man of action, the relationship between the deities and man was, as has already been pointed out, direct, mechanical and constraining for both. It was but an extension of the theory of exchange of goods which prevailed on earth between men, to the world of spirits. That theory of exchange insisted that the receiver of a gift should always make a return gift of greater value than that which he had received. Of the spirits who had so much, man could

105 at least, demand an equal exchange. The crux of the question then
771 was, who is to evaluate the human gift? The answer of the mat-
776 ter-of-fact man was both, the spirits and man. For that reason, he contended, risk and danger must always inhere in the human-god relationship and there was little that could be done about it except to take every precaution one could. This must be accepted. Such was life. Suffering and tragedy loomed large there and the relationship between the deities and man was part of it. The gods could, at best, only help man to keep his balance and maintain his sense of proportion. It had always been a human problem and always would remain one. A whole class of literature, the worak, dealt with this theme. The picture it painted was not too optimistic.

105 It was the priest-thinker who was the optimist. He attempted a
771 time-honored solution of philosophers, that of giving man some of
776 the attributes of divinity, in other words, a greater sense of fixity and
812 security, a greater degree of permanence, and some possibility of foreknowledge.

Winnebago philosophers seem to have attacked this problem repeatedly and suggested a number of solutions. According to one theory, gods and men had been equal in the beginning. At that time all existent beings could transform themselves at will into the one or the other *ad infinitum*. When, however, the world was to take its present shape, all the beings had to transform themselves permanently into the one or the other, into gods or into human beings.

Thus, at one time, man had actually partaken of the divine. This
105 was, of course, only divinity in retrospect, and was not of great
771 importance in developing divine stature for man now. Winnebago
775 thinkers, instead, fell back upon two universally accepted folkloristic beliefs, that in the immortality of the soul and that in reincarnation. The first, however, implied a complete and irretrievable separation from the earth and human beings. To be of any value in the task of developing divine traits for man, the soul, the permanent component of man which left him at death had to be bound, in some way, to the earth. This could best be done by reinterpreting the nature of death. This was done by having it merely imply no loss of personal consciousness at all but simply a temporary stumbling.

There existed an unbroken continuum. No more, however, could be done in the way of reinterpretation. The philosopher could not do away with the palpable fact that the body of a deceased person remained motionless and decayed. The ghost, conscious though he remained and fully aware of what was going on around him, was unable to establish contact with the living or they with him and he always remained jealous of the living and not too kindly disposed to them. The continuum predicated was, consequently, reduced to a mere shadow.

With the belief in reincarnation, the priest-thinker could do much more. Here a kind of continuum already existed. The priest-thinker had merely to develop the concept of a continuing consciousness. Thus the first attribute of divinity, permanence, was on its way to accomplishment. This permanence was further enhanced and fixed by having an individual born again into the very same family and reliving, in every detail, his previous existence.

In the myth giving the origin of the Four Nights' Wake over the body of the dead, this is the main and insistent theme. Thus the second attribute of divinity, unchangeability, was on its way to accomplishment. The two other traits of divinity, foreknowledge and omnipresence, presented greater difficulties for their attainment. The latter, however, was not of great significance in the Winnebago concept of divinity. The former was. Here the belief in reincarnation offered little help. Recourse had therefore to be made to shamanistic practices and magic proper where both beliefs were quite common. On the whole the Winnebago priest-thinker, particularly in his greatest triumph, the Medicine Rite, eschewed magical practices and that is why little really is ever said about foretelling events. Yet it is significant that the very first story in the Medicine Rite and the one which purports to be the account of how the Rite was begun by a man, makes this foreknowledge of the future, the basic gift that a prospective member received. How fundamental it remained is proved by the fact that when the Peyote Cult was introduced among the Winnebago, the two gifts the peyote bestowed were the foretelling of the future and the ability to transport oneself anywhere by mere thought.

105 771 776 The priest-thinker thus contended that man could be made to approximate to the deities by simply manipulating powers and attributes which some individuals, at least, already possessed. Was it, however, wise to leave it to the individual himself to attempt this approximation? There had always been individuals in the community who essayed it but the net results of their attempts had spelled misfortune for them and misfortune for the community. They were generally the practitioners of evil magic, the poisoners. The Medicine Rite is replete with stories about them. Apparently, then, this was not a matter to be left to the discretion of an individual or for that matter to human beings at all. Man was to be educated to divinity by the deities themselves. For this purpose both were to be transformed into more disciplined, more responsible, more ethical and more profoundly realistic beings. Just as in the attainment of the goods of life, so now in the attainment of the benefits flowing from divinity, he was to face the problem bravely and realistically and endure stoically and understandingly the hardships and sufferings involved. In short, divinity had to be achieved. It could not be thrust upon one. The deities, likewise, had to be educated and be made to realize that nothing was due them as such and that they could expect no sustenance from man unless their own way of life was organized and ethically ordered and unless their blessings were given in good faith and in gratitude.

105 771 776 538 The poet-philosophers composed many a worak to bring out just these points. To give an example. A child is fasting and refuses one gift after another from the deities. Perturbed, they turn to the father and ask him to discover what the boy wants that has not already been granted him. In answer to his father's question, the boy says he does not wish to die. Neither the entreaties of the father or the spirits avail. And so the boy must die although he is rewarded by being transformed into a pine tree.

Now this is actually a completely transformed version of a well-known story, *The Child Who Fasted Too Long*. In the original version he dies because he has overreached himself. In such stories the spirits are neutral, that is, where they are not actually inciting

the young faster to overreach and destroy himself. Thus we see along what lines the reinterpretations of the priest-thinker were made.

This was the theory that the priest-thinker tried to impress upon his fellowmen in order to introduce a greater sense of confidence and security in the relationship between man and the deities. Because of the very high demands it made upon the worshipper, it remained largely a philosophical-ethical ideal and the fairly sharp line of demarcation between human beings and the spirits continued in force as the popular theory. Some there were who even insisted that it was, not only the courageous, but the morally justifiable thing to do, to coerce the deities into acquiescing in man's demands. That was the proper way to meet divinity, to challenge the gods, accept what they granted and, then, to attempt to fulfill the conditions imposed even if they meant death. Few individuals in the community, for instance, had greater prestige than the few who had secured a blessing from the much dreaded deity, *Disease-giver*. He had two faces, one dealing life and the other death. No suppliant knew which side would be turned toward him when he made his offerings, at noon, in the full blaze of day, contrary to what held for all the other deities, namely, that they must be approached at night.

This, of course, is the warrior's creed and, in a civilization like that of the Winnebago where the highest ambition as a man was to achieve distinction on the warpath, it naturally was very important. Yet to this, the chief of the tribe might well retort: such courage and such risks have their moral justification only when one is fighting the enemy or avenging the death of a kinsman. They are inapplicable when approaching a god. The taking of great risks concerns not only oneself but the whole community and must be subject to the sanctions of the community. A person must be carefully and properly educated before he dare take them. To exhibit fearlessness and heroic courage is, in itself, no virtue. Indeed, in the wrong place or on the wrong occasion, they can and do lead to death and destruction.

And so, in the realm of religion as in that of social organization and mythology, the problem to be faced is depicted as being the same. How are we to resolve the differences between the 'earth' interpre-

105 771 tation with its insistence upon warding off evil by force and obtaining good by force, and the 'sky' interpretation, with its emphasis on conciliation and appeasement and its attempts at the resolution of the opposites? The rituals take up the same question.

5. RITUALISM

105 575 571 796 There are two fundamental types of ritualistic organization among the Winnebago, those based on clan membership and those based on blessings from the same spirits. In other words, the bond is either a social one, membership in the same clan, or a spiritual one, a common religious experience. The clan rituals have one major extension, a ceremony where those members of each clan who are the guardians of the warbundle of that particular clan, gather together in a feast for all the main deities. At this ceremony they ask for the renewal of the powers of these warbundles and for the promise of success on the warpath. Set off, apparently, from these two types of ritual there is a third, the Medicine Rite, with but one example, where membership is based upon personal conduct and achievement other than war and where, usually, one can only enter when there is a vacancy caused by death. In those cases where a person became a member through personal achievement he was, in the old days, generally, a man in middle age because of the rigorous and difficult entrance requirements. When taking the place of a deceased member a person could, however, even be under twenty.

An individual is consequently either born with the right of membership in a ceremony, like the clan feasts and the warbundle feasts, or he has to achieve it, as in the ritual societies based on blessings from the same spirits and the Medicine Rite.

The clan feasts which are in honor of the ancestral clan animals need not detain us here. Nor do we have to dwell upon the ritual societies based on common supernatural experiences. For membership in the latter there are really no requirements except willingness to endure the comparatively light hardships of fasting. The spirits or deities rarely, if ever, failed to grant the suppliant a vision. Formerly,

10:Radin E-5 (1908-1913) 1945
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But to come now to the Medicine Rite. It is only superficially that its organization is really unique, for both in the snake clan feast and in the Night-spirit ritual society there are four positions just as in the Medicine Rite. The resemblances between the latter two are, in fact, so marked that we can well understand why some Winnebago regarded the Night-spirit society as the model for the Medicine Rite. In a sense it is true that the Medicine Rite could be interpreted as the society of those who have been blessed by Earthmaker. Yet, in spite of these similarities, it was regarded as something *sui generis*. What is, then, the specific character of its organization that gives it this unique position in the Winnebago ritualistic system?

The answer is simple—two traits, the method of admission and the fact that a large part of the tribe belongs to it. While the size of the membership at the beginning of the nineteenth century was unquestionably larger than a hundred years before, still it must always have been very large. Moreover, there were no restrictions as to sex. Compared to any of the other ceremonies, the Medicine Rite thus stood out as a completely democratic organization where, theoretically, the only requirement was membership in the tribe.

This uniqueness in certain fundamental traits of its organization was matched by its purpose and much of its content. Its avowed purpose was, not only, to ensure man a long and happy life on earth but to ensure his return to it after death. Of course all ceremonies were concerned with the first of these two purposes. And the belief in reincarnation had always, as we have pointed out, been well-known and accepted. The uniqueness lay in the method of attaining it. That method had two parts, a magical-symbolical and an ethical-philosophical. Admission to the Rite entailed being shot and 'killed' by a missile and coming to life again. This is the magical-symbolical part. The ethical-philosophical part consisted in strict adherence to a high code of behavior laid down for you and enforced by the older members of the Rite. Only by adherence to it can you surmount death.

Yet admission is only a preliminary to your real task. It only sets your feet, so to speak, in the proper road. You must steel yourself to being shot and 'killed' innumerable times and you must obtain

10:Radin E-5 (1908-1913) 1945
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mastery over death by shooting and 'killing' others innumerable times, so that death, when it finally comes, will be as familiar to you as life. Then, when full of years, you actually die, the passage from life to death will become a mere incident and, being born again will, for yourself, constitute no break with your former existence. 105 575 796 771

It is quite clear that we are dealing here with the vision of a poet-philosopher and this will become more evident when we recognize the original nature and meaning of the shooting ritual. Shooting missiles into a person was an old and well-recognized shamanistic device. The missiles were generally animal claws and they were meant to kill. Your only protection was to provide yourself with magical counter measures or, to obtain some specific blessing from a spirit. That you could convert what was meant to be a death-dealing missile into a life-giving one by leading a virtuous life was something new when applied, for instance, on the grand scale to be seen in the reinterpretation of the myth of the *Journey to Spiritland* as found in the Medicine Rite (cf. pages 257 ff.). To express it, required a particular language, with new extensions of meaning for words and in which metaphor, symbolism and mysticism ruled supreme, in short, the language of a poet and a philosopher. Myths were reinterpreted in an entirely new fashion and put to entirely new uses. To understand and comprehend it a special and difficult kind of education and training was needed.

Yet, in spite of its esoteric character, one thing was never forgotten, that the ceremony was to serve concrete purposes. It was not the vision of a Road of Perfection to be rewarded by eternal peace and happiness in heaven but, on the contrary, the vision of a Road of Perfection which was to be rewarded by a return to earth and to the vicissitudes of living. It was life that was to be faced, with all its imperfections, trials, and with all the comedies and tragedies that often played such havoc with ideals of perfection.

Indeed the imperfections of life intruded themselves into the poet-philosopher's vision, despite his attempts to exclude them. It was impossible, for instance, for individuals to forget that they were not only members of the Medicine Rite but, likewise, warriors and often shaman. Thunder, as the idealists might well do against the presence

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of shamanistic practices in the Rite, they could never quite exclude them and the only answer they possessed was to condemn them and show how they led to dishonor, death and destruction.

This interweaving of the concrete and the symbolic and mystical led to a double, at times even a triple, set of significances for every action and word and which, occasionally, reached incredible heights of complication, intricacy and subtlety.

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Since no other ceremony resembles the Medicine Rite in the respects just mentioned, we may well stop and ask ourselves what could have led to its creation? What is the cultural meaning of this new mode of expression, this new type of reinterpretation of ancient beliefs and attitudes? Allowing for the natural creative impulses of our Winnebago poet-philosophers, it is not unreasonable to suspect that some particular circumstance or circumstances must have called them forth.

Ordinarily, any attempt to determine such a matter among the American Indians, in the absence of an authentic historic record, would mean mere speculation. Fortunately this does not hold true for the case in point. There are indications within the text of the Rite itself and some historical evidence which proves pretty conclusively that, in its present form, the Medicine Rite is a development late in Winnebago history and after the coming of the French in 1632. We can, in fact, date it more precisely. The otterskin pouch and the shell used in the shooting ceremony come from the *midewiwin* ceremony of the Ojibwa. The Winnebago obtained them from the Fox and this could not possibly have been before 1680-1690.

Now, the Winnebago between 1650-1900 were passing through a very serious crisis. Their numbers had been seriously decimated by ferocious struggles between them and the Illinois and Fox and by the diseases introduced by the Europeans. The influence of the French, as well as the new conditions resulting from French encroachment, were playing havoc with the old order of things. Nor must we underrate the influence of the French missionaries.

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That a new type of ceremony should have appeared among the Winnebago just then cannot be ascribed to mere chance. It must bear some relation to the crisis. The moment we put the two to-

Element	Occurrence																								
	Tüb	W-F	Gos	Ute	SHS	Cr 2	Cr 1	Ro C	Wa	Do 2	Do 1	Ats	Kio	Com	Kio	Kio	E-A	H T							
239. Feast follows meeting	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+							
240. Aligned between leader and door starting at west: Bible		−	+	+	−	−	−	−	+	−	−	• −	−	−	−	−	−								
241. Staff, rattle, and feathers	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		−	+		+	+	+	+								
242. Whistle	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	−	+	+	+	+	+	+	+								
243. "Chief peyote"	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+								
244. Crescent of earth	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+								
245. Crescent of ash	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	−	+	+	+	+	+								
246. Fire	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+								
247. Fire stick	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	−			+	+	+	+	+	+								
248. Water	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	−	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+								
249. Person blessing water	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	−		+	+	+	+	+	+	+								
250. Peyote breakfast	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	−	−	+	+	+	+	+	• +	+								
251. Beliefs connected with peyotism: belief in a Great God (Great Spirit)	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	• +	+	+	+	+	−	+	+									
252. Belief in spirit forces subservient to the Great God	+		+	+	+	+			+	+	+	+	(−)		+	+									
253. Peyote is a spirit force chosen to guide the Indians	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+	+	• +	+	+	+	+								
254. Peyote's function is medicinal	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		• +	+	+	+	+	+	+	+								
255. Peyote's function is particularly ethical-religious	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+	+	• +	+	+								
256. Peyote's doctrines can be understood only through peyote intoxication	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+	(+)	+	+	+	+	+								
257. Ultimate goal of intoxication is enlightenment and physical betterment	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+								
258. Individual can be helped by concerted prayer	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+	+	+	−	+	+	+								
259. Individual must attain purity before approaching spirit forces	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+		+	+	+	+	+								
260. An important function of peyote meeting is to purify	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+	+	(+)	+	• +	+	+								
261. Modifications permitted by new revelations	+		+		−					+	−														
262. Approach to spirit forces should be humble	+	+	• +	+	+	+		+		+	+	• +	+	+	+	+	+								
263. Concept of the Peyote road as ethical-religious	+	+	• +	+	+	+		+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+								
264. Identification of the Peyote road with the Creator's road		+	• +	+	−			−		+	+	−		−											
265. Identification of the Peyote road with Jesus' road		+	• +	+	−					+	−	−	• +	+											
265a. (See note)																									

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